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Message Text

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12
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 /054 W
---------- 088057
P R 310815Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8343
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1248

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MA
SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER KILLED IN HELICOPTER CRASH

REF: (A) TANANARIVE 0038, (B) TANANARIVE 1247 (301601Z JUL76),
(C) TANANARIVE 1245 (301358Z JUL 76)

SUMMARY: DEATHS OF PRIME MINISTER RAKOTOMALALA, CHIEF OF STAFF RAKOTONIRAINY AND MAJOR RAMPANANA REPRESENTS LOSS OF THREE INDIVIDUALS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD US. MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT RAJAONAH WAS NEITHER ESPECIALLY PRO-WEST OR ANTI-WEST. IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHO WILL SUCCEED THEM OR OF WHAT PARTICULAR ORIENTATION VIS-A-VIS US THEY MAY BE. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH AS PRIME MINISTER (AND DEFENSE MINISTER) RAKOTOMALALA DID NOT VISIBLY ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE POSITION OF WESTERN COUNTRIES IN MADAGASCAR, HE WAS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRANCE. (HIS WIFE WAS IN FRANCE AT TIME OF HIS DEATH). HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD US WAS REINFORCED BY HIS TRIP TO US IN 1974 AS LEADER GRANTEE. NONETHELESS, AS DESCRIBED IN BIOGRAPHIC REPORT REF (A), HE WAS NOT ONE TO ATTEMPT COUNTERING THE PREVAILING WINDS AND HE WAS NOT AN INNOVATOR. HIS VALUE TO US, THEREFORE, WAS MARGINAL BUT AT LEAST HE WAS NOT INHERENTLY OPPOSED TO WESTERN INTERESTS OR IN FAVOR OF
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COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES IN MADAGASCAR.

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2. CHIEF OF STAFF COLONEL ALPHONSE RAKOTONIRAINY WAS A CLOSE FRIENDDF MANY AMERICANS AND, AS WITH NUMEROUS OTHERS IN THE MILITARY HIERARCHY PAST AND PRESENT, EXTREMELY WELL DISPOSED TO OUR INTERESTS. HE AND HIS FAMILY ATTENDED AMERICAN GATHERINGS FREQUENTLY, INCLUDING PUBLIC ONES SPONSORED BY THE USIS CULTURAL CENTER, AND HIS WIFE HAD ORGANIZED ENGLISH CLASSES FOR OTHER MILITARY WIVES AT THE CENTER. HIS PRESENCE WILL BE SORELY MISSED BY US.

3. MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PIERRE RAJAONAH WAS A BIT OF AN ENIGMA AND NOT CLOSE TO AMERICANS. HE WAS PRIMARILY A CIVIL SERVANT, HAVING BEEN SECRETARY-GENERAL (1972-75) OF THE SAME MINISTRY PRIOR TO BEING NAMED MINISTER IN JUNE 1975. HE HAS NOT BEEN UNFIRENDLY AND BOTH THE FRENCH AND GERMANS HERE HAVE FOUND HIM TO BE COOPERATIVE. WE SUSPECT THAT HE TOOK A MORE OR LESS NEUTRAL ROLE IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES (WHERE MINISTERS HAVE MARGINAL DECISION-MAKING INFLUENCE).

4. MAJOR RAMPANANA, CHIEF OF PRIME MINISTER'S MILITARY CABINET, WAS MEMBER OF MILITARY DIRECTORATE FEBRUARY-JUNE 1975. HE WAS KNOWN FOR PRO-WEST LEANINGS.

5. SUB-LIEUTENANT TODISOA WAS PILOT OF ALOUETTE-3 HELICOPTER AND WAS ONLY MALAGASY PILOT CHECKED-OUT ON HELICOPTERS, HAVING RETURNED ONLY IN MARCH FROM HELICOPTER TRAINING IN INDONESIA. ANOTHER MALAGASY PILOT IS CURRENTLY BEING TRAINED IN USSR FOR SOVIET MI-8 HELICOPTER WHICH WAS DELIVERED TO GDRM MAY 1 AND IS NOW PILOTED ONLY BY SOVIET CREW.

6. PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESSION. UNDOUBTEDLY, RATSIRAKA WILL APPOINT NEW PRIME MINISTER AFTER CONSULTATION WITH CSR. WE WOULD BET THAT HE WILL APPOINT ANOTHER MILITARY MAN, PROBABLY BECAUSE MOST INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF CSR WOULD SO INSIST. HOWEVER, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHO IT MAY BE SINCE NO ACTIVE DUTY OFFICER APPEARS TO HAVE THE PRESTIGE NOR THE FOLLOWING TO BE AN OBVIOUS CHOICE. ONE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION IS GENERAL GILLES ANDRIAMAHAZO WHO RELUCTANTLY
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SERVED AS CHIEF OF STATE FEBRUARY-JUNE 1975 FOLLOWING RATSIMANDRAVA'S ASSASSINATION. ANDRIAMAHAZO IS CURRENTLY ON VACATION IN EUROPE AND DUE BACK NEXT WEEK. HE HAS TOLD CHARGE' ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, WHEN WE WERE DISCUSSING PRESENT AND FUTURE LEADERS OF MADAGASCAR, THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT BEING DRAFTED SHOULD RATSIRAKA LEAVE OFFICE, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE PLANS TO RETIRE AT THE END OF 1976.

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7. AS FOR A NEW CHIEF OF STAFF, RAKOTONIRAINY'S DEPUTY IS LT.COL. PHILIPPE JOHNSON (A MALAGASY, SHOULD ANYONE HAVE ANY DOUBTS BY THE NAME) WHO WAS DESCRIBED BY OUR RECENTLYY-DEPARTED DEFENSE ATTACHE AS FRIENDLY BUT IN POSSESSION OF NO LEADERSHIP QUALITIES THAT COULD BE DISCERNED. SINCE THE CHIEF OF STAFF WOULD NORMALLY BE APPOINTED BY THE DEFENSE MINISTER, WHO HAD BEEN RAKOTOMALALA, RATSIRAKA AND THE CSR CAN BE EXPECTED TO DECIDE ON THE APPOINTMENT. MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE POSSIBLE CONTENDERS ARE PRO-WEST AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT RATSIRAKA AND THE CSR WILL RISK DISSENSION FROM THE MILITARY TO REACH DOWN FOR A JUNIOR OFFICER MORE TO THEIR IDEOLOGICAL LIKING. SHEINBAUM

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